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Russia Is In Egypt To Stay

Soviet President Nikolai V. Podgorny's visit to Egyptian President Anwar el-Sadat brings to CIA Director Richard M. Helms new information that dampens a major objective of President Nixon in the dangerous Israel-Arab impasse.

In his programing relating to this impasse President Nixon feels that the Soviet Union -- determined to employ the strategic Indian Ocean area -- does want a situation suitable for reopening the Suez Canal. Sadat convinced Secretary of State William P. Rogers of this in his recent Cairo talks with Mr. Rogers. But now enter the CIA's Cairo findings.

For, privately, President Nixon also feels that the West should insist on a phase-out of Russian forces in Egypt. But the evidence multiplies that they are there to stay. In fact, Mr. Helms finds them slapping back hard at Sadat's May 14 purge of Vice President Aly Sabry and 12 of Sabry's ambitious pro-Soviet cabal.

THE KREMLIN included Gen. Ivan G. Pavlovsky, the First Deputy Minister of Defense, on his visit to Sadat. And surely the Kremlin knew Pavlovsky is, personally, anathema to Sadat.



A month before Gamal Abdel Nasser's last mission to Moscow Pavlovsky visited Cairo with Red Army Chief of Staff Marshal Matvei Zakharov. Their performance was hushed-up scandal. Sadat is a wily but proud man, and these Russians stupidly left no stone unturned to show their contempt for the Egyptians.

This began by barring all Egyptians within miles of the airport at Heliopolis and ended in an orgy of brutal tactics by the Pavlovsky-Zakharov entourage in front of Cairo's Hilton Hotel.

Nasser immediately telephoned Soviet Premier Alexei N. Kosygin in Moscow to complain, and Kosygin sent Foreign Minister Andrei A. Gromyko, no less, to smooth things over. Dour Gromyko, however, is far from his best at a chore like this.

WHEN NASSER WENT TO MOSCOW Sadat accompanied him. There Pavlovsky gave him the brush-off in public at the Kremlin banquet the night before the Egyptians returned to Cairo. Yet on the Cairo visit Podgorny threw Pavlovsky at Sadat again, as if reaching for a way to show Sadat that the Soviet intends to rule the Egyptian roost.

In short, to show Sadat that the Russians intend to stay there -- although U. S. Ambassador to Moscow Jacob D. Beam has made it clear to Premier Kosygin that President Nixon feels the West should insist on a phase-out of the Russian forces in Egypt.

Mr. Helms informed Mr. Nixon that there are today an appalling 15,000 Soviet troops and 4,000 Russian technicians in Egypt. There are also six Red Army generals. And Pavlovsky brought in from Algiers Soviet Admiral Sergei G. Gorchkov, who had been visiting Algerian President Houari Boumedienne.

THE CIA REPORTS THAT, in addition to seaborne deliveries, Russia has flown in more than 800 missions of war materiel. It finds that Egypt today possesses at least 1,500 Russian tanks. She had fewer than 1,000 at the time of the June, 1967, six-day war with Israel. The CIA discovered and counted 570 Russian heavy-artillery pieces and 1,100 armored personnel carriers.

Egypt now has 104 Russian helicopters, 60 jet bombers and 365 jet fighters. Although not the Soviet's most-advanced MIG-23s, the jet fighters are mostly super-MIGs produced when the Kremlin thought our country would build a new generation of jet bombers. Moreover, at least 300 Egyptian pilots have been trained in Russia and, in addition, some are now being Russian-trained in Syria and may be practicing against Israel in the Syrian Air Force.

In the CIA's opinion, however, and shared by Defense Secretary Melvin R. Laird, Russia's greatest contribution at this moment consists of 1,000 SAM missiles and their search radar. These are extremely advanced, complex and lethal weapons. Many are mobile, on tracked vehicles mostly deployed in Upper Egypt to protect the vital Nile dams. Their operations centers are Soviet-controlled.

Mr. Helms told the President that these complexes represent the best air defense of any country outside NATO. And, in the President's view, the hope of a phased Russian pullout now becomes hardly more than a personal dream. The U.S.S.R. has achieved too heavy a mortgage on Egypt's military and political action.